



CHASING GHOSTS

Story: Scott R Brackett

Genre: Film Noir

Setting: Post War 1950's London - A dimly lit office. Smoke curls from a half-burned cigarette in an ashtray. A lone desk lamp casts long, angular shadows. Two detectives, FRANK HENDERSON and ELLIOT STONE, sit across from each other, the desk between them like a dividing line.

The film starts with credits and then cuts to character selection...

THE CHARACTERS

This is a film piece where each character is introduced solo standing on a small rotating platform, think gaming character style introduction when you build a character, perhaps a brick wall background or obvious concrete detail, only the character is lit.

just something different that gives the film some edge and is a great short character introduction.

I've not seen this done before and it's an essential piece.

Frank Henderson - A Canadian Soldier remained in England After the War and Opened a Detective Agency with his war colleague Elliot Stone.

is straightforward and unpretentious, reflecting a man who is honest, tough, and to the point. It's a name that suggests someone who doesn't waste time on pleasantries—perfect for a detective who's lived through hard times and speaks his mind.

Frank is solid and dependable, giving the sense of someone who has a history, a man with experience and a reputation. It's a name that carries weight without being flashy, matching Frank's grounded, reliable nature.

Frank is rooted in reality—strong, straightforward, and practical.

He wears a black suit and white shirt but likes to bring colour to his style with different ties every day. His shoes are also polished but are less important to him as he finds himself often brawling with scoundrels and villains or slapping dames.

Elliot Stone – A British Military Police Sargant turned Detective after the War

Elliot Stone is a name that suggests intelligence, introspection, and a more cerebral approach. It gives off an air of sophistication, making it ideal for a detective who is thoughtful, measured, and analytical, often using his mind to solve cases rather than relying on brute force.

Elliot is solid, reliable, and strong, he conveys resilience and emotional weight, implying someone who may appear tough on the outside but could be carrying hidden depth or vulnerability underneath.



Elliot Stone creates an image of a sharp, calm, and determined detective—someone who carefully observes and analyzes the world around him, all while hiding any personal turmoil or complexity beneath a composed surface.

He wears a black suit white shirt and black tie with a chrome tie pin every day, his shoes are immaculately polished, a throwback to his military days. Elliot is a hard non nonsense street fighter, but has never gotten into a fight since the war, he wins his battles with his words.

Vanessa Delaney – Irish Woman who fell I love with the wrong man.

Vanessa is elegant, timeless, and sophisticated, evoking the image of a classic femme fatale. She is a woman that suggests beauty, charm, and an air of mystery. A woman who can captivate and disarm with just a glance, yet hides deeper layers behind her grace, hinting at a woman who may come from a refined background but finds herself entangled in darker, more dangerous affairs.

Vanessa's is both alluring and elusive—someone whose beauty and charm draw others in, but who's past and motivations remain carefully guarded. A woman whose appearance is a mask for deeper secrets, perfect for a dame who might be tangled in crime, love, and betrayal.

Vanessa wears dresses that keep her modest but always figure hugging, she's a bombshell without the platinum blonde hair.

FADE OUT



S R Brackett 03.12.2024.

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Black and white images of post war London with Franks voice over...

SCENE 1 - Frank & Elliot

(The camera opens to a single window lit from the inside—rain falls on the window, the cigarette in Frank's hand, the dim light throwing shadows across the room. The tension in the air is palpable. Frank breaks the silence.)

(Cue atmospheric music, with the sound of rain tapping against the window.)

The tension builds gradually, filling with intricate exchanges, subtle reveals, and moral dilemmas. This is a film of artistically lit closeups, shots of cigarettes burning in ashtrays and coffee steaming... desk details... clothing and shoe close ups... swinging light bulb...desk lamps...rain on windowpanes. Possibly thunder...our female must have been crying... closeups of her eyes and lips...she's a bombshell.

FRANK (V.O.):

"London's like a broken clock—always ticking but never quite right. Post-war, they said. Rebuild, they said. But all I see is rubble under a slick coat of rain. It's the kind of city that swallows you whole if you're not careful... or spits you out when it's had enough."

(Pause, the camera lingers on Frank lighting his cigarette.)

"My name's Frank Henderson. A soldier turned gumshoe. Some days, I think I swapped one battlefield for another. Only here, there's no uniform, no rules. Just shadows and lies."

FRANK

We've been over this a hundred times, Stone. And every time, we end up back here. Same desk, same arguments, same dead ends.

ELLIOT

(leaning back, arms crossed)

Maybe because you keep looking in the wrong places.

FRANK

(smirks, taking a drag)

Oh, and you've got all the answers, huh? You ever stop to think maybe the trail's gone cold because someone's been burying it?

ELLIOT

(sharply)

And maybe that someone's closer than you think.

(A long silence. Frank exhales slowly, the smoke twisting in the light.)



FRANK

You accusing me, Stone? After everything we've been through.

ELLIOT

(shrugs, almost mockingly)

Not accusing. Just observing. You've been... distracted lately. And every time I get close to a lead, you're there to steer me away. Makes a guy wonder.

FRANK

(laughs darkly)

You think I'm on the take? That I sold out Lila? You really think that low of me?

ELLIOT

(leans forward, voice low)

I think people do desperate things when they're cornered. And you, Frank... you've been cornered for years.

(Frank slams his hand on the desk, making the lamp flicker. His voice rises, but there's a crack in it.)

FRANK

You don't know a damn thing about me, Stone. Not the real me.

ELLIOT

(quietly, deadly calm)

Then tell me. Who are you, Frank?

(Another long silence. The rain seems louder now, or maybe it's just the tension. Frank stares at the desk, his cigarette burning down to ash.)

FRANK

I'm a guy who's tired. Tired of chasing shadows. Tired of burying people I care about. And tired of watching this city chew up everyone who tries to make it better.

ELLIOT

(sits back, studying Frank)

So what are you saying? You're giving up?

FRANK

(shakes his head, his voice softer now)

I'm saying... maybe it's time to stop pretending we're the good guys.

ELLIOT

(narrowing his eyes)

What the hell does that mean?



FRANK

(looks up, meeting Elliot's gaze)

It means this city's rotten to the core, and we're not cleaning it up. We're just another layer of dirt on the pile.

(Elliot stands abruptly, pacing. He runs a hand through his hair, the frustration clear.)

ELLIOT

No. No, I don't buy that. Lila believed in us, Frank. She believed we could make a difference.

FRANK

(bitterly)

And look where that got her.

(Elliot stops, his fists clenched. His voice is tight with emotion.)

ELLIOT

You think I don't know that? You think I don't see her face every damn night? But giving up... that's not what she'd want.

FRANK

(quietly)

Maybe not. But it's what's real.

(Elliot shakes his head, then reaches into his pocket. He pulls out a small, folded piece of paper and tosses it on the desk.)

ELLIOT

You want real? There it is.

(Frank picks up the paper, unfolding it slowly. His expression darkens as he reads.)

FRANK

Where'd you get this?

ELLIOT

Doesn't matter. What matters is it's a lead. A real one.

FRANK

(scoffs)

You think some scrawled address is gonna crack this case wide open?



ELLIOT

(leaning in, his voice sharp)

I think it's more than we've had in months. And I think you're scared to follow it because you know what we'll find.

FRANK

(slams the paper down, standing up)

You're damn right I'm scared! You don't get it, do you? If we go down this road, there's no coming back.

ELLIOT

(steps closer, almost nose to nose with Frank)

Maybe that's the point.

(They stand there, the tension crackling like static electricity. Finally, Frank steps back, his shoulders slumping.)

FRANK

Fine. You want to chase this lead, we'll chase it. But don't say I didn't warn you.

ELLIOT

(grabbing his coat, a grim smile on his face)

Wouldn't have it any other way.

(As they move to leave, the phone rings. They both pause, exchanging a look. Frank picks up the receiver.)

FRANK

(into the phone)

Henderson.

(His expression shifts—anger, fear, then resolve. He hangs up without a word.)

ELLIOT

Who was it?

FRANK

(grabbing his coat, his voice cold)

Another body.

ELLIOT

Where?

FRANK

The address on your damn paper.

FADE OUT



SCENE 2: The Bombshell

(The camera is still focused on Frank and Elliot, as before—intense, almost electric with their back-and-forth. Then, the door swings open, and a woman steps inside, her face streaked with tears, her dress torn slightly as if she’s been through some ordeal. She hesitates, almost as if she’s not sure whether to speak.)

During Vanessa’s Entrance:

(Closeup of Vanessa as she steps into the room. The sound of her heels echoes.)

FRANK (V.O.):

“And then she walked in. A dame with eyes like storm clouds and lips that whispered trouble. I’ve seen a lot in this line of work, but Vanessa Delaney? She had a way of making the whole room stop breathing. She wasn’t just beautiful—she was the kind of beautiful that comes with a price tag no one can afford.”

VANESSA

(voice trembling, barely above a whisper)

Please... please, you have to help me...

(Frank and Elliot both turn to face her, instinctively standing from their chairs. The woman, clearly distressed, takes a few steps forward, the door closing behind her with a soft thud.)

FRANK

(gruff but softening slightly)

What’s the matter, sister? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.

VANESSA

(sniffling, tears flowing freely now)

My husband... he’s gone. I—I don’t know where he is. I think... I think something’s happened to him.

(pauses, glancing at the two men, searching their eyes for any sign of hope) You have to find him... before it’s too late.

ELLIOT

(leans forward, eyes narrowing as he watches her, intrigued but cautious)

Why us? Why come to us now?

VANESSA

(swallowing hard, trying to regain her composure)

I—I heard things. People said... my husband... he was connected to some... some bad business. But he’s gone missing, and I—I can’t find him. If you find him, I’ll do anything... anything you want.



FRANK

(skeptically, taking a step closer but not offering any comfort)

What kind of business are we talking about, sweetheart? And why does it smell like there's more to this than just a missing person case?

VANESSA

(looking away, her voice cracks)

He got involved with some men... dangerous men. I never knew what it was until... until I saw the papers. Then I realized it's all tied to... the murders.

(The word murders hangs heavy in the room, as both Frank and Elliot exchange a glance.)

ELLIOT

(stepping closer, a flash of realization in his eyes)

What do you mean "tied to the murders"? What kind of tie?

VANESSA

(wiping her eyes, her voice quieter now, almost a whisper)

I think... I think he found something. Something he shouldn't have.

(She takes a shaky breath, her eyes darting to the door as though someone might be listening. The weight of the room shifts.)

VANESSA

Please... you have to find him. I don't know where else to turn.

(Elliot steps forward, holding his hands up in a gesture of calm, though his face is stern.)

ELLIOT

We'll help you. But you need to trust us—100%. No secrets. You understand?

(The woman looks at them, then slowly nods, her gaze falling to the floor. Frank watches her closely, his face unreadable.)

VANESSA

(softly)

His name's Richard Delaney. Find him before it's too late.

ELLIOT

Richard Delaney eh... so Wahda we call you then, Mrs. Delaney



VANESSA

(softly)

Oh, yes of course...I'm ... Vanessa, Vanessa Delaney.

(She turns to leave, but before she exits, she stops and glances back at Frank and Elliot. There's something in her eyes—something that makes the air feel colder. Then, she exits quickly, the door closing softly behind her.)

SCENE 3: Reflection

(Frank and Elliot stand in silence for a moment after she leaves. The tension in the air is almost palpable, the room now feeling smaller. Frank slowly lights another cigarette, the smoke curling upward.)

FRANK

(breaking the silence, voice low)

You see the look in her eyes, Stone? She's hiding something.

ELLIOT

(still watching the door, his voice distant)

You think so? Or maybe she's just scared.

FRANK

(with a bitter chuckle)

Everyone's scared in this city. But that dame? She's got something more. I don't buy the "missing husband" story.

(Elliot slowly turns to face Frank, his expression thoughtful.)

ELLIOT

I don't know... there was something about her. (pauses, almost reluctantly) She reminded me of Lila. The way she looked at us... desperate, but... beautiful.

FRANK

(takes a drag from his cigarette, his eyes narrowing as he exhales)

Beautiful? Yeah, I noticed. But I didn't think we were in the business of falling for dames with troubled pasts.

ELLIOT

(glances down, then back at Frank, his voice quieter now)

No, I didn't mean it like that. Just... she's got the same eyes. The same haunted look Lila used to have.



FRANK

(his voice hardens, eyes cold)

Don't go there, Stone. Don't start getting all sentimental on me.

ELLIOT

(shakes his head, almost as if trying to shake off a memory)

Maybe it's just me. But something doesn't sit right with this case. We've been chasing shadows for too long... now we've got a dame throwing us off course.

FRANK

(staring at the door, as if expecting the woman to return)

Yeah... but we take the job. We always do. And if she's tied to this mess, we'll find out soon enough.

(They stand in silence for a moment, both lost in thought, before Frank flicks his cigarette to the ground and crushes it underfoot.)

FRANK (Voice-Over, contemplative and gravelly):

There's only one man in this world I'd trust to watch my back, and that's Elliot Stone. Met him in the trenches, somewhere between hell and no man's land. I'll never forget it—Elliot, outnumbered five to one, fought like the devil himself to pull his unit out alive. Hands bloodied, eyes cold as steel. Toughest bastard I've ever met.

But it wasn't just brute strength. He didn't fight like the rest of us—mindless, desperate. No, Elliot was sharp, calculating. Used his head and his weapon like they were one and the same. He's the kind of man who knows when to fight and when to let his silence do the talking.

He doesn't scrap like he used to—guess the war took that out of him. Now, he fights with his words, his instincts. And me? I follow his lead. Because in a world full of liars and backstabbers, Elliot Stone's the only man who's never let me down. Never will.

FRANK

Alright, let's go. Time to chase this ghost before it gets too late.

ELLIOT

(nodding, determined)

Right behind you.

(They head for the door, the tension in the room hanging in the air like a thick fog. The camera lingers on the empty chair where the woman had been sitting, the echo of her presence still heavy in the room.)

FADE OUT



STUDY & RESEARCH

WHAT IS A FILM NOIR?

Defining film noir is a bit tricky because it's considered by many to be both a style and a genre. Professor James Naremore summed up the issue nicely in saying "It has always been easier to recognize a film noir than to define the term." But despite contention to its classification, most critics agree that film noir can be identified by its pessimistic tone, morally grey themes, and high-contrast visuals that mix light and shadow. In our video essay on film noir, we break down the binding similarities in further detail.

HISTORY OF FILM NOIR

Film noir translates from French as "dark film." The term was used by critic Nino Frank in 1946 to describe four Hollywood crime dramas: *The Maltese Falcon*, *Laura*, *Murder, My Sweet*, and *Double Indemnity*. Frank's writing gave classification to film noir – but the term wasn't widely used until decades after its original invocation. Nowadays, film noir is characterized by archetypal characters, high-contrast aesthetics, and complex stories with unhappy endings.

DEFINING FILM NOIR TROPES

Film noirs contain many tropes: including types of characters, like the private detective, the corrupt cop, and the femme fatale; stylistic elements, like stark black and white cinematography and chiaroscuro lighting; and narrative conventions, like unhappy endings, where the antagonist gets caught but the protagonist doesn't get what they want.

FILM NOIR GENRE VS. STYLE DEBATE

There is considerable debate as to whether film noir is a "genre" or "style." Pro-genre critics point to the repetition of plots, settings, characters, and aesthetics as proof that film noir constitutes its own genre. Pro-style critics argue that those elements can, and do, exist separately; in different combinations; and/or in distinct genres altogether. Film noir has also been immortalized by the neo noir movement, which renovated many of its progenitor's tropes through genre mashups and graphic visuals.

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